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UNCLAS LAGOS 000054

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON STRANDED WORLD AIRWAYS PASSENGERS

REF: LAGOS 000031

1. On Thursday, January 8, 2004, approximately fifty stranded World Airways passengers appeared at the Consulate demanding assistance in returning to the U.S. Some of the passengers claim they have been stranded since December 31 and have been staying overnight at the airport while awaiting word from World Airways as to when they can return.

2. In an effort to be responsive and to calm the passengers, ACS Officer arranged a meeting with the stranded passengers in which the Consul General attended. The Consul General advised the passengers that we were concerned about their situation and attempting to find alternatives for their travel. However, their only financial recourse may be a legal one.

3. Passengers received a briefing from the ACS officer as to the repatriation process and alternatives such as securing flights via another carrier as well as obtaining money from family and friends to assist them financially.

4. The passengers stated their appreciation at having the Consul General speak with them. Further, they stated it was the first time during this entire ordeal that they felt anyone cared about their situation.

5. Over the past two days, we have collected eleven applications for a loan. Of those, we have determined that four are truly in need of repatriation. We have also received additional passengers that are asking for letters for their employers or schools. We have learned that World Airways tickets were sold through Friday, January 9, 2004. The airline stopped flying on December 31.

6. ACS Officer believes we will continue to see stranded passengers who become increasingly destitute as time passes. As they come in, we will process them all as individual repatriation cases.

HINSON-JONES